

[John W. Hartman]

[S241?] - LA DUP

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER George Hartman ADDRESS [2438 W. St. ?]

DATE September 27, [1938?] SUBJECT American Folklore

1. Name and address of informant John W. Hartman, 2438 W St., City
2. Date and time of interview Sept. 27, 1938 1 to 4:30
3. Place of interview 2438 W St.
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant My father
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you None
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. [Home?] is 49 years of age, the furniture, most of it has been with the family for years. Mr. Hartman has been an invalid for the last 24 years. He spent all of his time sitting in his bed, reading or listening to the radio. He is 77 years of age.

FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER George Hartman ADDRESS 2438 W. St., City

DATE September 27, 1938 SUBJECT Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT J. W. Hartman 2438 W St., Lincoln , Nebraska

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1. Ancestry Pennsylvania Dutch
2. Place and date of birth Pennsylvania, Feb. 1863
3. Family
4. Place lived in, with dates Syracuse, Nebr., 1890, DeWitt, Nebr., 1880-85, DeWitt, Nebr., 1885-1910, Lincoln, Nebr, 1910-38
5. Education, with dates Grade school education
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates Miller, merchant 1880, Produce manager, [1880-1915?], Invalid, 1915-1938
7. Special skills and interests Newspapers, radio and friends
8. Community and religious activities Church radio
9. Description of informant 77 years old; remembers very clearly events of the past
10. Other points gained in interview Vivid memory of the past

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

Story as related to me by John Hartman:

"John Gilbert took a homestead in Saline county, 1866, near the town of Swan City on Turkey Creek. Swan City is now extinct. Swan City was moved to DeWitt in 1871 on account of the railroad being moved to DeWitt.

John Gilbert was a stage-driver working for the government. He drove the stage from Swan City to the west on the little Blue river and Big Sandy river. Those were in the early days when the Pawnee Indians reservation was 30 miles southeast of DeWitt on the Blue

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river. The Pawnees were a friendly tribe to the whites and a great many of them were used as scouts in the Union army and State [Militia?]. The Sioux were a quarrelsome tribe and great enemies of the Pawnee. The Pawnee in the fall would go west to get their buffalo meat for the winter. One time on their way home they passed John Gilbert on the Little Blue and after they had been gone a day the Sioux were after them. On the way back the Sioux asked Gilbert if they had seen anything of the Pawnees. Gilbert told them the Pawnees had gone east. After the Sioux had gone Gilbert unhitched one of his best horses and got on it and rode over the divide and told the Pawnees that the Sioux were after them. The Pawnees then sent their women and children ahead with their [meat loads?] The men then fortified themselves in the brush on each side of the stream and when the Sioux came they crossfired, the Sioux, losing half of their men. The Sioux then disappeared.

After that the Pawnee were great friends to John Gilbert. Many of their tribe would come each fall to make Gilbert a visit. In one of their

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

visits, Gilbert went down to the timber where they were camped and setting around a little fire. Gilbert got a lot of brush and logs to put on the fire. The Indian chief said: "White man damn fool — builds great big fire and have to get a long ways from it. Indian builds a little fire and sets around it."

"I was born in Pennsylvania and came to Nebraska after the Civil War. My father, being a miller, settled at [Factoryville?] fifteen miles from Nebraska City and started a mill for a Mr. Jennings.

The winter of [1862?] was very severe and cold with plenty of snow. It was almost impossible to keep warm with old style cook stoves and green wood. My sister's feet

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frosted sitting by the stove with quilts around her. This town (Factoryville) is just a memory of old timers as it passed out of existence many years ago.

— From there my father went to Nursery Hill to start a new mill for Boyson and [Neath?] of Nebraska City. This was in 1869. Nursery Hill was quite a trading post on the Oregon Trail, 25 miles west of Nebraska City. There was a flour mill, blacksmith shop, two stores, postoffice, taverns and government stables for their stage horses. They would change their four horses here for fresh ones to make the trip to Lincoln. Also there was a line from [here?] to [Teoucah?].

There was very few bridges in those days; all streams were forded and roads went over the country — the shortest routes. No section lines those days.

Our greatest scares those days were Indians and the great prairie fires, as the rolling land was not yet settled and it all was a vast prairie. All settlers were along the streams where they had their wood and poles for their dugout and sheds. Coal was not available in those days. I remember the great Easter storms of [1873?]. One of the most disastrous in Nebraska up to that time. It snowed and blowed for three days so hard that [you could?] not leave the house. The snow was deep and it froze in the face of the cattle. The cattle drifted with the wind and snow and consequently were smothered to death in the snow. Many homesteaders lost all of their stock this way. It was also terrible on wild life. Prairie chicken, quail, birds, were destroyed. We found, after the storm, many flocks of quail that had smothered.

When the railroad came from Nebraska City in the 70's, the town of Syracuse sprang up. The town of Nursery Hill was moved to Syracuse and it now is but a memory to old timers.

I was back there four years ago. I had been away for sixty years. Everything was changed. The town of [Nursery?] Hill-gone. Nothing left but a marker with a covered wagon on the

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top saying: "Nursery Hill on Oregon Trail." My boyhood memories would not realize such a change. It was a nightmare to me."